

Winner- Architecture category

Una Mirada Circular / A Circular Viewpoint (Puebla de Arenoso, Castellón)

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Photographs: Oleh Kardash

DESCRIPTION OF A CIRCULAR VIEWPOINT

This project stands on a small plot of land that was once a threshing floor to the south of Puebla de Arenoso, with superb views of the reservoir of River Mijares. Once upon a time it was a place buzzing with life, but it succumbed to the inevitable passage of time, being overtaken by vegetation. The history of this former focus of activity became lost in the mists of time, and it was dismissed and abandoned.

A Circular Viewpoint is a response to this neglect and an attempt to recapture the former threshing floor's lost dignity. The project is not just a haven and a resting point, but a place to meditate and pause on one's route.

It is closely interrelated with the surrounding landscape, which it embraces in two clear, symbolic ways through a circular vantage point and tiered seats that slope gently down to the land below.

The vantage point is the main focus of the project. In the middle of it, a solitary Montpellier maple tree rises up like a guardian angel, unaffected by the passage of time. From this high platform, the horizon stretches into the interminable distance, with unhindered views.

There is nothing to distract the attention or bar one's view. Visitors are free to gaze at the endless landscape, forging an almost mystical relationship with it. It is a place frozen in time, in a sea of serenity.

In contrast, the tiered seats slope gently down toward the pastureland, evoking more earthly, intimate sensations. While the vantage point rises up toward the heavens, the staggered seats cling to the land in close unity. Not only do visitors gaze out from this grandstand, but they also sit, feeling the solid ground beneath their feet, enveloped in an aura of peace and quiet. A more direct connection with the natural backdrop is established, with a sense of communion between human beings and the earth beneath our feet.

This duality between skywardness and close proximity is also reflected in the materials. The ceramic tiles present in both parts are used in two contrasting ways. On the platform of the vantage point, extruded stoneware tiles in a 12x12cm, 6x24cm, 12x24cm, 8x32cm and 12x32cm format are used in a cartwheel pattern, evoking the movement of oxen as the grain

there was threshed. The pattern created by the combination of different sizes and formats directs your eyes inward toward the middle, where the maple tree stands like a silent witness.

In contrast, on the tiered seats and lower platform, larger porcelain tiles (60x60cm and 30x60cm) are used in a more modern way, seemingly merging with the land. These more abstract-looking features gently descend like a mantle that unfolds to the ground, hinting at profound ties with nature. Steel and concrete have been combined with ceramic tiles to create a structure with an apparent artisanal air. Imperfections from the construction process are not regarded as flaws, but as marks that add a touch of authenticity.

A Circular Viewpoint is more than just an architectural space. It forges dialogue between past and present, between today and yesteryear. The ethereal is brought into contact with the earthly, inviting visitors to stop, look and listen to the echoes of time in the surrounding landscape.